

2020

in Fort Monroe, where this lieutenant general was a deputy CONARC and in charge of reserves in the Army.

There was a very small number of people, but most of them were on dual duty. They had some other jobs in CONARC or in CinCLant, or they were part of the joint staff. And they prepared innumerable plans for operations in Africa. At that time, there was a lot of argument as to who would conduct such operations. You see, the Joint Chiefs had created this other unified command under General Adams, CinCStrike CinCMeafsa (Middle East, Africa, and South Asia,) which was supposed to be a planning staff, but that was given something which was gotten into the concept by General Max Taylor and the Army particularly, who tried to have the new unified commander given responsibilities in Africa and South Asia which belonged to CinCLant and CinCPac, the two Navy unified commanders.

There was a lot of argument in the Defense Department about what this command should do. Originally, the idea, which was approved by the Secretary of Defense and the President, was that there would be a command, CinCStrike, whose job would be primarily to train the Army and the Air Force together in joint operations - a very laudable aim: to have some way in which the Army troops and the Air Force airplanes could be trained to operate together under one command. But this was expanded into something

bigger, and CinCStrike then began to plan to conduct military operations in a unified area, so the titles of CinCStrike and CinCMeafsa were combined.

Well, this happened some time during this process. Admiral Dennison had already been given the task of planning for operations in Africa, and this Joint Task Force 4 was set up for that purpose. CinCStrike also began to get involved in the Cuban crisis later on. But there was a lot of disagreement between CinCStrike and CinCLant, when Admiral Dennison's predecessor was there. I think this was when CinCStrike was created.

Admiral Dennison tried to establish good relations with General Adams, CinCStrike, and to get away from this infighting going on between CinCLant and CinCStrike, recognizing that this didn't get anywhere.

Well, as we got towards the Cuban crisis problem in which the possibility of joint action came closer and closer, Lieutenant General Truman, who was the commander of Joint Task Force 4, was brought in as Chief of Staff, CinCLant to help Admiral Dennison by having a commander from another service, an officer from another service, help out in the planning. And I think the Joint Task Force 4 staff was already incorporated into the CinCLant staff. There was really then a division, for the first time, of CinCLant and CinCLant Fleet in Norfolk. Then this lieutenant general became Admiral Dennison's immediate

subordinate responsible for the joint planning for the Cuban crisis.

The Fleet, of course, had a large participation. Admiral Dennison had to face the problem of how to organize his command for participation in the Cuban crisis. Now, the normal thing that we talked about up to then was through joint task forces. But there's another method, which is to operate through the component commanders. Prior to that time, Admiral Dennison had succeeded in getting the Joint Chiefs to agree to have CinCCONARC, the Army general at Fort Monroe, and the Air Force general at Langley Field, ComTAC, Commander Tactical Air Command, designated as component commanders of CinCLant for planning purposes. That had been working fairly well in that they could prepare subordinate plans to CinCLant plans, but the Forces were not assigned to CinCLant. They acted really as component commanders to CinCLant, and the third component commander, CinCLant Fleet, was Admiral Dennison himself.

Admiral Dennison was very smart in getting this arranged, because that got him into the unified area with the other services helping out, although they did not furnish forces. And since they did not furnish forces, Admiral Dennison could say, "Well, I cannot have a joint staff with only Fleet forces." So he didn't create a joint staff for that purpose. It was only when the Cuban

crisis came so close to operations and we really had to talk about doing something and having forces assigned or earmarked, that this arrangement of bringing an officer from another service to be his chief of staff for joint operations took place.

Now, I want to say that as we got closer to the execution of any possible Cuban plan, both General Sweeney, the Air Force ComTAC, and General Powell, the Army CinCCONARC, were extremely helpful, and they assured Admiral Dennison that they were going to give full support, and, in fact, almost placed themselves under his orders, I'm sure without consulting their Army or Air Force chiefs of staff. I thought they were terrific in that they realized we're here in business and all that interservice bickering is not important. They were working together in the planning, and "we are going to do the job, and we will work for you, Admiral Dennison." I thought it was really a very, very satisfying picture to see - these two good Americans said, "The Hell with all this petty stuff, we're going to go to war, to fight and the way to do it is for us to work for Admiral Dennison." That was fantastic, and they did it!

Q: When it came right down to it, he had joint forces of 500,000 men under him.

Adm. R.: I don't know how many, but the planning included a very large force, and both the Army and the Air Force went all out at that level. I don't know what was going on in Washington, but I'm confident that those two generals really went out of their way to do everything possible to make the operation a success, without worrying what the policy was in Washington, or any restraint that might be placed on them.

The planning went on in detail, of course.

Q: Tell me about your increasing awareness of this problem. What were the indications you had that it was becoming a major problem?

Adm. R.: The problem of Cuba? There were, of course, some flights of U-2s over Cuba, and Admiral Dennison was getting information on this subject. I remember one time we were down, I think, in Panama. It was not Norfolk. McCone happened to be in the area. Perhaps it wasn't Panama. Perhaps it was Puerto Rico. I remember sitting with McCone and Admiral Dennison, the three of us. I went with Admiral Dennison on all his trips. He always took me with him. Dennison said he was concerned about the situation in Cuba, and he asked McCone to increase the flights of the U-2s so that we could get more recent information. Because I think they were about a month

apart up to that time. And McCone seized on it very quickly. McCone was equally concerned, and apparently he persuaded the President or the Joint Chiefs, the President probably, to increase the flights, and this is how they got increased. It was mostly through Admiral Dennison's initiative that it passed through McCone, realizing that he needed intelligence, that he didn't know what the picture was. There were enough fragments of information to indicate that something was going on. There were reports coming in through intelligence channels from Cubans, Cuban agents, and so forth, that had seen this and that, but there was no hard data. And the only way you could get hard data was through the U-2 flights.

Of course, at that time we had to do a lot of planning about protection of the U-2 aircraft, which had to be done by the Air Force, but under CinCLant's supervision. Then, of course, there was a buildup of forces, so that if we had had to invade, we would have invaded with a very massive force. When I became ComPhibLant, I had not only the whole Marine Division on the east coast, the whole Fleet Marine Force, but also ten thousand Marines that came from the west coast, in an amphibious group. And that was cranked into the planning later on.

It was a very busy time doing the planning, which was done mostly by the newly organized CinCLant -

Q: Task Force.

Adm. R.: Well, it wasn't a task force then. It was really CinCLant staff. I don't think they had time to even draw up organization charts. The thing was just created and got into play with the full cooperation of both ComTAC and CONARC. I thought they were terrific.

Well, this time General Adams, CinCStrike, who wanted to run the Cuban operation, said that was his mission. You see, CinCStrike even had a naval officer as chief of staff, and he had great ambitions of being the guy to run the Cuban operation. He prepared a Cuban plan. He was hoping that if anything happened, the forces would be given to him rather than to CinCLant, for him to carry out the operation. That was his concept.

Q: The African situation had cooled, had it?

Adm. R.: The African situation had cooled, but again, there, the same thing happened. When the time came, instead of giving the job to CinCStrike, they gave the job to USCinCEur, I believe, because USCinCEur was the one that had to provide the forces. So CinCStrike was sort of frustrated. When anything was about to happen - they'd done a lot of planning, my God! they planned all over the place - they would give the job to one of the establishe



unified commanders rather than to him. So he wanted to get into the Cuban operation, and he prepared a Cuban plan. Admiral Dennison invited him to come up and present it. Admiral Dennison handled this thing with CinCStrike with the greatest finesse. He listened very patiently, and General Adams presented his plan, which was not a very good plan. General Adams was going to have mostly an air-borne operation with very little ground support, and he would have failed. Anyway, Admiral Dennison received him with great kindness, and CinCStrike went home. Admiral Dennison ran the operation through the component commanders, not through a joint task force, but through CinCLant Fleet, CONARC and ComTAC, and that was the way he organized it, which I thought was perfect, because he got away from the problems of who's going to be the joint task force commander, from what service. And the forces involved were of such great magnitude that you would have had to have at least one four star general to command the joint forces, like Eisenhower, whereas going through the component commanders was a very practical way of doing it, and it brought in the people who really had control of the forces to carry out the plan. It was very well done.

Admiral Dennison also got involved in differences with CinCCarib, the fellow in Panama, who was an Army general, O'Meara. And he very, very cleverly, very

wisely, was able to de-fuse what had been a very bitter controversy between CinCCarib and CinCLant, again over the Caribbean Sea area, which CinCCarib thought was part of his responsibility.

Q: And Cuba fell within that.

Adm. R.: Not really. I think CinCCarib was a little bit out of the picture by that time, but CinCStrike was the other rival as to who was going to run it. It would have been really very, very bad if it had been CinCStrike. He just didn't have the expertise.

Q: Well, Admiral Dennison hadn't spent five years in the White House for nothing.

Adm. R.: He learned. Well, I watched him with great admiration, the way he handled these two situations. He just handled those fellows in such a manner that there was no bitterness, no antagonism, and he got what he wanted. It was quite an education.

Q: What were some of the signs that you observed in addition to the U-2 photography?

Adm. R.: Well, only the reports that you got from agents,

mostly Cuban people reporting back from there.

Q: Wasn't there additional traffic, too, from merchant-men coming in?

Adm. R.: Oh, yes, of course. There were the Russian ships bringing the missiles, and there was a lot of surveillance by our Navy patrol planes, to try to identify these ships and take photographs and see if they could detect anything as to cargo. There was a tremendous amount of this activity going on, of course.

Q: Was the activity of Senator Keating in the Senate, his daily announcements, and so forth, ~~was~~ this helpful in alerting the nation to this growing problem?

Adm. R.: Possibly. I don't know. Of course, it didn't affect us, but I'm sure that it did raise some questions among other congressmen, and so forth, and I think the administration tried to discourage Keating.

Q: Yes, they did. But it may have pushed them to some decisive action.

Adm. R.: It may well have. Of course, I wasn't familiar with events in Washington at the time.